

The War Fifty Years Ago

Commotion Over the Seizure of the Persons of J. M. Mason and John S. Sidel, Confederate Commissioners to Great Britain and France—They Were Taken From Under the Protection of the British Flag While on Board the Steamer Trent on a Voyage From Cuba to England—The Seizure Was Made by the U. S. Steamer San Jacinto, Commanded by Captain Charles Wilkes, an Experienced Naval Officer.

By JAMES A. EDGERTON.
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DURING the week ending Nov. 19, 1861, the one event that blotted out all other topics in the public mind was the Trent affair. The report of this was printed in the New York papers on the morning of Nov. 17 and was not known generally throughout the country until that day or later. It produced the most unbounded excitement, the north exulting over the arrest of two of the chief men of the Confederacy, James M. Mason and John S. Sidel, commissioners respectively to Great Britain and France. Outwardly the south was indignant, but secretly it was as exultant as the north, hoping that the incident would precipitate war between the United States and England, the two commissioners having been seized on board an English vessel.

The arrest was really made on Nov. 8, but there was no way to get the news to the United States until the

passengers. Commander Williams, the British mail agent aboard the Trent, protested as "a representative of her majesty's government."

Making the Arrest.

In the midst of the commotion, two of the San Jacinto's men took Mr. Mason by the collar and led him to the boat, assisting him on board, the same operation being performed in the case of Mr. Sidel and the two secretaries, Eustis and McFarland. The families of Sidel and Eustis were on board, and the officers of the San Jacinto offered to accommodate them if they desired, but the invitation was declined. Commander Williams after his return to England told a story of Miss Sidel having struck Lieutenant Fairfax repeatedly in the face, but this was afterward denied by Fairfax, who said the only basis for the story was that a hunch of the ship had thrown the lady against his shoulder.

There was one phase of this affair that seems little less than providential. Captain Wilkes, in writing, had instructed Lieutenant Fairfax as follows:

"Should Mr. Mason, Mr. Sidel, Mr. Eustis and Mr. McFarland be on board you will make them prisoners and send them on board this ship immediately and take possession of her (the Trent) as a prize."

An Incident That Averted War.

This part of his instructions Fairfax chose to ignore. Not only so, but he was careful to give no unnecessary offense to the commander of the Trent. At one time, when that vessel was drifting into shallow water and Captain Moir warned the Americans to hurry or he would not be responsible for the ship's safety, Lieutenant Fairfax signalled for the San Jacinto to draw away, so that the Trent might go more into the channel. Upon returning to his own vessel with the prisoners Fairfax told Captain Wilkes what he had done and urged that the Trent be not taken as a prize, advancing as an argument that it would delay their movements and divide their crew, thus making it impossible for the San Jacinto to participate in the attack on Port Royal, as was then planned. This argument seemed to convince Captain Wilkes, and he consented that the British vessel go on her way. On such small incidents does history sometimes turn. Had the Trent been taken as a prize it is scarcely possible that war with Great Britain could have been averted.

It is surprising that Captain Moir did not insist on the Americans taking command of his vessel and thus have forced the issue. He himself said later that the British admiral was "very much disappointed and displeased" that he had not done so. His reply was that it had never occurred to him. Lieutenant Fairfax having been so courteous and having engaged him

sewa became public comment on England's possible attitude regarding the arrest. It cited the international law on the subject and stated that most of the authorities supported a view that would justify Captain Wilkes' act. It also dwelt upon the fact that England had uniformly insisted on the right of search even in times of peace; therefore her government could not object to the arrest of the two commissioners without strutting her own record. Yet the most farsighted men of the time feared that Great Britain would seize on the incident as a ground for declaring war. There was a threefold motive for so doing. She could thus break the blockade, which was seriously interfering with the cotton trade on which so many of her mills depended, she could be avenged for past defeats at the hands of the United States, and she could strike possibly a deathblow at



LIEUTENANT D. M. FAIRFAX, U. S. N., WHO MADE THE SEIZURE.

republican institutions. It was the thought of these things that gave pause to our level-headed statesmen.

On the surface at least all Washington was immensely pleased with the act. There was one notable exception. Benson J. Lossing is authority for the statement that on the day the arrest of Mason and Sidel became known in America President Lincoln expressed himself as doubting the wisdom of their retention. Lossing says he was in the war office at Washington when the news from the San Jacinto was first received and that three cheers were repeatedly given, led by the secretary of war, Governor Andrew of Massachusetts and others. The same day Mr. Lossing visited the White House and had a short interview with the president. He quotes Mr. Lincoln as then saying:

"I fear the traitors will prove to be white elephants. We must stick to American principles concerning the rights of neutrals. We fought Great Britain for insisting, by theory and practice, on the right to do precisely what Captain Wilkes has done. If Great Britain shall now protest against the act and demands their release we must give them up, apologize for the act as a violation of our doctrines and thus forever bind her over to keep the peace in relation to neutrals and so acknowledge that she has been wrong for sixty years."

McClellan Also Doubtful.

The president was not the only one who saw the perils of the situation. Senator Sumner told a friend that from the first he believed we should have to give up the prisoners. General McClellan in a letter written the day the news reached Washington, Nov. 17, said:

"I find that today is not to be a day of rest for me. This unfortunate affair of Mason and Sidel has come up, and I shall be obliged to devote the day to endeavoring to get our government to take the only prompt and honorable course of avoiding a war with England and France. It is sickening in the extreme and makes me feel heavy at heart when I see the weakness and unfitness of the poor beings who control the destinies of this great country."

It is too bad that General McClellan could not announce the truth of a proposition without sneering at others. On its face the slur in the above would seem to have been aimed at Mr. Lincoln. Yet in the same letter McClellan takes occasion to give a partial and patronizing approval to his chief by saying, "The president is honest and means well." Mr. Lincoln was not only honest and well meaning, but saw the truth of the Trent affair quite as clearly as did General McClellan.

Outside of the popular excitement over the Mason and Sidel affair there was little of interest during the third week in November. One amusing incident involved the capture of some Union forgers near Upton's Mill, Va. These men had left some forage on a certain farm and went out to get it. The farmer seemed friendly and invited the soldiers to stay for dinner. They did so, leaving their muskets and an inadequate guard outside. The farmer sent word to a Confederate troop lurking in the vicinity, who came up quietly, overcame the guard before they could make an outcry and bagged the squad, forage and all.

During this week General Banks advanced into Accomac county, Va., some of his troops having a slight skirmish near Point of Rocks. Other affairs of minor importance occurred near Falls Church, Va.; Cass county, Mo.; Warsaw, Mo.; Romney, western Virginia; Wirt Court House, western Virginia; Palmyra, Mo., and Cypress Bridge, Ky. General Floyd was now retreating out of western Virginia, virtually ending the fighting in that section.



JOHN SIDELL, CONFEDERATE COMMISSIONER TO FRANCE.

so in conversation about other matters that he had "failed to see what afterward was very plain."

The arrest of Mason and Sidel was almost universally applauded in the north. One reason for the acclaim was the prominence of the prisoners. Both men had been members of the United States senate, and one of the secretaries. Eustis had been a congressman and had married the daughter of a prominent Washington banker. As for Captain Wilkes, he became the hero of the hour. The secretary of the navy wrote him a commendatory letter. Boston gave him a public dinner. The New York Historical society elected him an honorary member, the officials of New York city tendered him a reception, and the congress of the United States gave him a vote of thanks.

Lincoln's Prophetic Vision.

Yet through all this chorus of joy there was a note of misgiving. The New York Tribune on the very day the



J. M. MASON, CONFEDERATE COMMISSIONER TO ENGLAND.

San Jacinto, the American sloop of war that had made the seizure, arrived at Fortress Monroe on the 15th. Four days later the vessel reached New York, where Mason and Sidel and their two secretaries were placed in the custody of United States marshals and ordered confined in Fort Warren, Boston harbor.

The San Jacinto was in command of Captain Charles Wilkes, who had already become a world celebrity by leading an expedition of exploration and discovery into the south seas and the antarctic circle. Prior to his encounter with the Trent Captain Wilkes had been on the west coast of Africa and on his return to American waters cruised about the West Indies, looking for the privateer Sumter, commanded by Captain Raphael Semmes. It was then he heard of Mason and Sidel and decided to capture them, after which he designed joining the Union fleet and participating in the attack on Port Royal. The fight there was over, however, before he came up with the commissioners.

Boarding the Lion.

Messrs. Mason and Sidel had managed to elude the Federal blockade by leaving Charleston in a small steamer on a dark and rainy night. They had been received with honors by the British consul in Cuba and took passage from Havana to St. Thomas in the British mail steamer Trent, commanded by Captain Moir. Before their departure the San Jacinto ran hurriedly to Key West, seeking some other Union vessel to help in the search, but, failing to find one, put back to the Bahamas channel, through which Captain Wilkes believed the Trent would pass.

There, just before noon of the 8th, the English vessel was sighted, and the San Jacinto prepared for action. A solid shot was fired across the bow of the Trent, but to this she paid no heed. A shell followed, and Captain Moir evidently saw the point of this argument, for he gave to his men the order to board. Captain Wilkes sent a boat in command of Lieutenant D. MacNeill Fairfax, executive officer of the San Jacinto, who boarded the Trent and demanded to see her passenger list. This Captain Moir refused, despite the fact that Great Britain was the one nation that had maintained the right of search and had refused to give it up even after we had beaten her in the war of 1812, fought over this very issue.

Lieutenant Fairfax then asked for Mr. Mason, Mr. Sidel and their secretaries, and Sidel, hearing his name mentioned, answered, "Fairfax was related by marriage to Mason, who was also located. Upon a demand being made that the commissioners and their secretaries go aboard the San Jacinto the gentlemen emphatically refused, stating that they would yield only to force. Thereupon Lieutenant Fairfax ordered the boat to be fired upon. The Trent could a great hubbub made by

FARM and GARDEN



MACHINE THAT SHELLS CORN

Ears Fed Into Hopper, and Kernels Are Separated Automatically—Lightens Farmers' Burdens.

Another device to lighten the farmer's labor has been invented by a Nebraska man. This is a machine for shelling corn, and, with it, one man can do the work of a dozen or more by simply feeding the ears into a hopper and turning a handle. Inside the body of the machine is a series of scrapers between which the cobs pass and these scrapers are so controlled that they will engage ears of



Machine Shells Corn.

any size. As the kernels are separated from the cobs they drop into a chute below the mechanism and are carried into bags waiting at the mouth of the chute. The cobs are ejected from the other side of the machine. As can readily be understood, this machine will save a great deal of labor, as the old method of shelling corn by hand was a tedious one at best, and was no gentle operation even for that type of citizen who has come to be known as "horny-handed."

TIME FOR HARVESTING OATS

Crop Should Be Cut When Grain Is Still in the Dough Stage—Haul in Before Heavy Rain.

Oats should be cut when the grain is in the dough stage. If cut when the grain is in the milk the grain will be light in weight, and if cut when full ripe there will be a loss of grain in handling, says a writer in the Baltimore American. We endeavor to cut when the milk is out of the grain. The crop is cut with self-binder, making small sheaves. Twelve sheaves are set to a shock, and as soon as the straw is cured and the grain hard and dry we haul in as quickly as possible. The crop should be hauled in before a heavy rain, as it is almost impossible to dry the bundles if the straw is once thoroughly wet. It is a hard task to take down the shocks, open out the bundles and spread out the sheaves to dry. Owing to the soft straw and chaff around the grain the moisture dries out slowly, even when the weather is hot and dry. Grain and labor are saved by getting the crop under cover before showers.

After the sheaves are hauled in the field should be raked. These rakes cut fine and mixed with a little mill-feed make an excellent summer feed for the horses. As soon as the oats are under cover the field should be cut over with the two-horse sulky cultivator or the steel disk. Run the cultivator both ways. This early working brings the wild seeds to the surface; it also prevents the soil from crusting over.

STACK HAY IN LARGE FIELDS

Modern Machine Shown Herewith Facilitates Work Considerably—Labor of Six Men.

On many western farms hay is stacked in large quantities, and the work is done by hand hired by the day. Consequently it is necessary to push the stacking as fast as possible. The modern stacker shown in the cut with the sweep rake facilitates



Western Way of Stacking Hay.

this work a great deal, says the Farm and Home. The hay is picked up by the sweep rake in bunches of about 1,000 pounds and delivered onto the stacker. The horse attached to the stacker pulls this onto the pile. Six men can put up hay at the rate of 25 tons per day with an apparatus such as this, using two sweep rakes, an ordinary rake and one mower.

Care of the Lawn.

If the season happens to be a dry one don't mow the lawn often than once a week. Frequent clipping causes rapid evaporation of moisture from the soil.

Allow the clippings to remain in a dry season. They help to shade the soil and act as a mulch.

To do good work with your lawn mower keep it well oiled and sharpened it frequently.

GRASS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE

Great Problem of Maintaining Fertility of Soil for Future Crops Solved in One Way.

(By W. R. GARDNER.)

In attempting to farm without grasses the farmer is lifting without a lever; he is pulling a load with the weight on the hind wheels; he is cutting with a dull ax.

With grass as a basis grains, fruits, vegetables and meat, all the triumphs of farming are possible. The first thing that I would advise all those who contemplate buying a farm to look into, would be its capacity to grow clover and other nutritious grasses and learn what means would be available for fertilizing such meadows.

The grass can be converted into milk and products into beef, pork or mutton and returned to the land in the form of manure for the grain crops or you may sell the hay by the ton according to the facts of your particular locality.

I would not advise any one to think of buying a farm that did not have at least 20 acres of grass land that would produce at least two tons of hay per acre under favorable conditions.

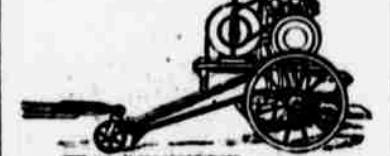
The greatest thrift and profit made by farmers off their farms in ten of the leading agricultural states that I have visited during the past two years have been made by those who make dairying and the growing of live stock their chief reliance.

The great question of keeping up the fertility of the soil for future crops can be solved in only one way and that is by the growing of more clovers and grasses and feeding more live stock and returning all of the manure thus made to the fields.

GAS ENGINE FOR FARM WORK

Large Wheels of Carriage Make It Easily Managed, Even on Rough Ground—Shown in Africa.

At the recent agricultural exposition in Tunis, Africa, the makers of the Gnome motor for aeroplanes exhibited a six-horsepower motor designed for use on the farm, which, while not presenting any novel features of motor construction, attracted



Gas Engine for Farm Work.

much attention on account of its unique mounting which closely resembles a gun carriage, says Popular Mechanics. The large wheels of this carriage make it easily managed even on rough ground, and two men can transport it from place to place. The motor is made for gasoline or oil consumption.

STORE POTATOES IN WINTER

Kansas Man Gives His Method of Preparing and Keeping Tubers During Cold Weather.

(By H. F. MILLER, Kansas.) My way of keeping potatoes during the winter is to select a high piece of ground that will drain itself well, then I put a lot of hay on the ground and put the potatoes on the hay, piling them up nicely. I then cover with hay or straw as thick as I think best, then put a light layer of dirt on the hay, and as the season gets colder, I put on more dirt. To keep potatoes in the spring for summer use, put them in a dark room and give them plenty of air, sprinkling some air-slacked lime over them. Also keep all sprouts off of them, and you will have potatoes until you can raise new ones.



Holding Food for Stock.

A full silo makes a fat pocket book. The manure spreader is a profit collector. The lead pencil is the most valuable tool on the farm. Poorly shocked grain is a shocking display of poor farming. You need a silo because with it you can make more money. Careful feeding is necessary to the economical use of the oat bin. Manure and dishing will renovate the worn out pasture or meadow. Corn is just right for the silo when it is a little too hard for roasting ears.

The most successful growers of alfalfa recommend sowing the seed in spring.

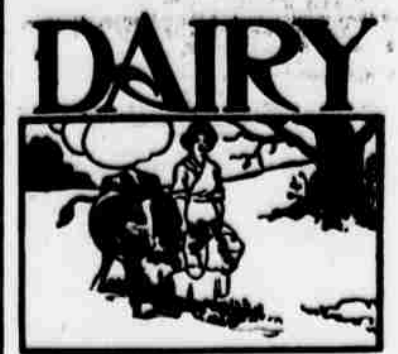
Full rye will make good spring pasture at a time when pasture will be greatly needed.

You can usually tell a good farmer by the orderly appearance of his barn floor and granary.

It is best to manure and plow the garden as soon as the growing season is over and the crops harvested.

If you watch the thistles carefully and do not let them go to seed for two or three years you will rejoice in their absence.

A one inch pipe from the tank on the windmill to the house and another to the barn with 50 feet of garden hose attached to each is a great deal cheaper than a fire.



BENEFITS OF GOOD FENCES

Nothing Adds More to General Appearance of Farm Than Good Strong Fences—Prevent Trouble.

(By JOHN BAILEY BRUCE.)

Good fences make friendly neighbors. Any man who keeps live stock should have good fences and strong gates. Broken down fences and dilapidated gates are a constant source of annoyance and trouble. Many valuable animals are injured by broken fences and gates, not always by the fence or gate itself, perhaps by getting out through the fence or gate into a field of clover or grain and eating sufficient to cause bloat or by getting into an apple orchard and



An Easily Opened Gate.

choking or by strolling onto the railroad track and being hit by the cars. Perhaps the whole herd breaks through the neighbor's fields and destroys his crops. Such things are mighty unpleasant and cause bad feelings among the best of neighbors.

Good fences and strong gates are cheaper than good stock and damage suits. Good gates and fences add to the permanent value of the farm. If a man has not sufficient pride in his farm to keep up his fences and gates the matter of economy should compel him to give these matters attention.

It is poor economy to allow a pure-bred cow to break through a \$2 gate and get with calf to some neighbor's scrub bull. The poor gate is the weakest link in the fence. There is nothing that adds more to the general appearance of the farm than good, strong fences. Such appearances amount to hundreds of dollars if we are selling our farms.

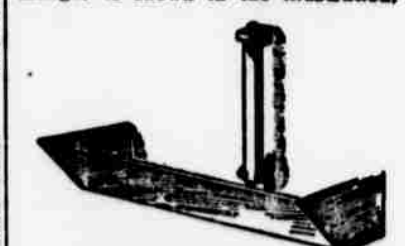
The gate shown in the illustration will be found to be of great convenience. A pin is set in the gate post and a pole at least as long as the gate is made to turn on it.

A box full of stones heavy enough to balance the gate is placed on one end of this pole, and to the other end is fastened a piece of strap iron that connects with the center of the gate. The hinges on this gate are pieces of round iron so set that a ring on the gate will slide up and down on them. This allows the gate to be raised or lowered.

HOLDING FODDER FOR STOCK

Device for Placing Cornstalks and Other Feeds That Would Be Thrown Out, Just Invented.

Fodder, such as cornstalks that are not shredded, is frequently tossed out of the manger and wasted. A device for holding this kind of feed against the wall in front of the manger is shown in the illustration.



Holding Food for Stock.

says a writer in the Popular Mechanic. It is made of 2 by 4 inch material, about 3 feet long, hinged at the lower end and clamped at the top. The stalks are placed behind the upright piece and securely clamped. Several of these devices placed at intervals along the manger will make it hard for the stock to pull the fodder out and waste it.

Dairy Products.

The cow will produce about seven times as much human food per unit of feed consumed as will the steer. In fact, the cornstalks, leaves and cobs produced on one acre of corn, if fed to a steer, will provide material for about 50 per cent. edible dry matter in the form of flesh, while if fed to a dairy cow about 350 per cent. edible dry matter will be produced. National economy, then, would demand that our hill pastures and lowland meadows as well as the coarse fodders of cultivated fields be employed in the production of milk.

Souring Cream.

The development of lactic acid, or the souring of cream, does not increase the butter fat content. As a rule, when cream becomes sour it is more difficult to test than when it is sweet. The difficulty in obtaining an accurate test of sour milk or cream lies in the fact that it is not easy to obtain an accurate sample.